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ABSTRACT

The changing demographics in U.S. institutions have contributed to the increasingly multicultural nature of classroom participants. Thus, teachers play a significant role in the desired educational outcomes when they value diversity. This study delineates a rationale for teacher education in terms of the multicultural construct. Multicultural education is a comprehensive and inclusive approach that empowers all participants in schools. Undoubtedly, meeting the growing demand to incorporate multiculturalism in all facets of learning lies in preparing teachers multiculturally. This paper discusses theoretical and pedagogical implications for teacher educators to equip prospective teachers to become more effective with all learners. Teacher education programs should take into account the following guidelines: (1) prospective teachers should be prepared to confront their prejudices and biases; (2) the history of the American educational system should be studied from a multicultural and pluralistic perspective; (3) teachers should be prepared to become multicultural brokers in the pluralistic classroom; and (4) they should be trained to be flexible in teaching. (Contains 20 references.) (Author/SLD)

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Preparing Teachers for the Culturally Diverse Classrooms

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Abstract

The changing demographics in the U.S. institutions have contributed to the increasingly multicultural nature of classroom participants. Thus, teachers play a significant role in the desired educational outcomes when they value diversity. This study delineates a rationale for teacher education in terms of the multicultural construct. Multicultural education is comprehensive and inclusive approach that empowers all participants in schools. Undoubtedly, meeting the growing demand to incorporate multiculturalism in all facets of learning lies in preparing teachers multiculturally. This paper discusses theoretical and pedagogical implications for teacher educators to fully equip prospective teachers to become more effective with all learners.

Preparing Teachers for the Culturally Diverse Classrooms

Introduction

The United States' universal culture is based on the diversity of various microcultures that interacted meaningfully within the overarching framework of democracy. Yet, very often history tells us that much more need to be done to ensure a harmonious interaction among diverse groups and cultures. Social and educational institutions tend to be the laboratories for testing the maxims upon which the U.S. culture is based. In particular, schools have always been viewed as the change agents in the pluralistic society.

Undoubtedly, the culturally diverse nature of the U.S. society is dynamic and evolving. The classroom is seen as a microcosm that symbolizes these dynamic changes and represents a concrete "slice of life" in the democracy we live in. Students in today's classrooms represent a wide range of linguistic, sociocultural, and ethnic variables in the culture of schools. Since the premise of the pluralistic democratic society is to value the diversity that exists in all aspects of life, it is worthwhile to revisit the role of teachers in terms of the diverse classroom and the unique needs of its participants.

However, there are those who argue that living in a democracy gives individuals the right to be ignorant. In fact, throughout history, the United States has "demanded assimilation of 'mainstream values' from all who reached its shores" (Daly & O'Dowd, 1992, p. 179). Although a great number of children have benefited from the U.S. public education, there still exists a denial of "societal benefits to vast numbers of Americans based on characteristics as arbitrary as ethnicity, gender, and/or class" (Daly & O'Dowd, 1992, p. 179). This is of course due to the monocultural stratification embedded in the culture of public education (Banks, 1995). In particular, teacher education programs have failed to adequately prepare teachers to meet the challenge of democracy and pluralism.

Thus, it is imperative to closely look at the ingredients of teacher successful teacher education programs that value differences and affirm the diversity of all learners. Rather than place the blame on students or teachers, it is more fruitful to confront these challenges by incorporating a more comprehensive, and thus more democratic, approach to teacher education. Such an approach has to have the potential to help educators and teachers to facilitate the process of change and emancipation.

Based on the premise and promise of multiculturalism, this paper views the role of teachers as an integral part of the success of diverse learners in the pluralistic schools. Thus prospective teachers ought to be prepared within the multicultural framework. This paper focuses on the issues relevant to teacher education to promote adequate training of teachers through augmenting their sensitivity to the cultural, linguistic, and cognitive characteristics of diverse learners as they relate to the learning and teaching in diverse settings. The discussion provides both theoretical and practical implications for teacher educators to fully equip prospective teachers to become more effective with all learners in multicultural settings.

Historical Background

Given the history of diversity in the U.S. educational institutions, the debate has always focused on the validity of such assimilationist sociological accounts as the melting pot theory. Since this theory has always failed to affirm the diversity in the American society, the search for solutions led educators and researchers to revisit cultural pluralism in an attempt to achieve equity and social justice in various institutions such as schools. According to Daly & O'Dowd, (1992), as in Banks (1994), the seeds for multicultural movements were planted in the early 1930s during which efforts to promote sensitivity to the differences brought by students in the classroom culminated in creating alternatives to assimilationist approaches to education. Those alternatives were embodied in founding several associations such as the American Council on Education (ACE), the Anti-

Defamation League (ADL), the National Education Association (NEA), and many others. The main function of those establishments was to develop a more meaningful approach to intergroup relations, and provide support for diverse groups in order to prevent prejudice and discrimination from plaguing the society. These associations also recognized the potential for schools and teachers to facilitate change conducive to social justice and harmony.

Although major accomplishments of these alternatives (such as ethnic studies) were evident in promoting the value of positive human relations as they pertain to teacher education, those reform efforts have failed to become institutionalized (Daly & O'Dowd, 1992; Ogbu, 1995). This is because mainstream educators failed to internalize the multicultural ideology along with misunderstanding intergroup educational reforms and their contributions to the goal of American educational system (Banks, 1994, 1995).

At the same time, with the dismantling of segregation in the wake of the 1954 Brown decision, the original multicultural movement started to gain momentum. Ethnic pride was accordingly on the rise. In addition, several constitutional amendments contributed to enhancing diversity among people of color and affirming their metaphysical and intellectual being in the public institutions. Among others, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1967 Bilingual Education Act, and the 1974 Equal Education Act contributed to the proliferation of voices for social justice and equity. In particular, the purpose of this litigation was to ensure equal rights for all participants in the schools. As a result, multicultural concepts started to be infused in teacher education, but with a limited scope.

The scope of multicultural education in the public educational institutions such as schools and universities took a form of highlighting contributions of diverse groups to the American civilization. Federal money was allocated to prepare teachers and faculty to develop multicultural awareness. Moreover, the demographic changes continued to demand more to be done to develop a "greater understanding of the contributions that the various cultures could make to an increasingly pluralistic society" (Daly & O'Dowd, 1992,

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p. 183). Multicultural education continued to be born out of the urgent need given the complex sociopolitical contexts that allowed inequity, discrimination, prejudice, and other social ills that plagued the American public schools (Nieto, 1996). In short, multicultural education was born out of the need to revitalize the American democracy, facilitate the desired change, and celebrate the diversity of all citizens in the pluralistic society (Grant, 1995).

Accordingly, "if change were to occur in the nation's schools, it was obvious that teacher-preparation institutions would have to assume a leadership role in developing programs that would enable prospective teachers to become sensitive to issues of multicultural, nonsexist education in the classroom" (Daly & O'Dowd, 1992, p. 184). Furthermore, if the diversity of the American society were to be affirmed and celebrated, prospective teachers would need to acquire the skills and competencies that help them meet the cognitive, linguistic, and social needs conducive to learning in the diverse classroom (Banks, 1994; Chisholm, 1994; Gay, 1995).

Teacher Education: The Multicultural Construct

Multicultural teacher preparation is a concept that encompasses an array of sociological, sociolinguistic, sociocultural, psychological, philosophical, and pedagogical elements (Garza & Barnes, 1989; Ovando & Collier, 1985; Bennett, 1995; Grant, 1995). These components are inherent in the basic premise of multicultural education and its promising educational consequences.

In order to provide a philosophical foundation for effective schooling, it is worthwhile to look into the definition of multicultural education within which teacher education is to be incorporated. Since multicultural education is a continuing process, it is important to identify its promises in translating the ideals of democracy and actualizing its desired educational goals by instilling the values, skills, and competencies in teachers and educators.

According to Suzuki (1984), multicultural education is defined as a multidisciplinary educational program that provides multiple learning environments matching the academic, social, and linguistic needs of students. These needs may vary widely due to differences in race, sex, ethnicity, or sociolinguistic backgrounds of the students and educators. In addition to enhancing the development of their basic academic skills, the multicultural education programs should help students develop a better understanding of their own backgrounds and of other groups that compose our society. Through this process, the program need to help students learn to respect and appreciate cultural diversity, overcome ethnocentric and prejudicial attitudes, and understand the sociohistorical, economic and psychological factors that have produced the contemporary conditions of inequality, alienation and ethnic polarization. Within the overarching framework of democracy, multicultural education should also foster students' and educators' ability to analyze critically and make intelligent decisions about real-life problems and issues through a process of democratic, dialogical inquiry. Finally, multicultural education should help conceptualize a vision of a better society and acquire the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills to enable them to move the society toward greater equality of freedom, the eradication of degrading poverty and dehumanizing dependency, and the development of meaningful identity for all people.

Thus, multicultural education is a comprehensive educational approach that aims to multiply learning opportunities for all participants and celebrate the cultural diversity represented in various educational and social institutions. In particular, it permeates the curriculum and teaching methods including the socialization and interactional processes among diverse participants in the culture of schools. Furthermore, the content and methodology of multicultural education must be founded on a democratic philosophical base that reflects a clear understanding of cultural pluralism and its sociopolitical implications in educational settings. The theoretical and pedagogical foci of multicultural approaches are centered on integration of multicultural education into not only a specific

unit or course but in all content areas in a systematic and vastly expansive manner. According to multiculturalists, to promote civic values and instill social justice in a pluralistic society, agents of change must construct the relevant knowledge, create novel equitable pedagogical practices, and celebrate diversity in educational institutions (Grant, 1995; Banks, 1995).

Providing what deficit theories cannot offer, multicultural education affirms individuals' rights and encourages active participation of diverse groups through a democratic dialogical process (Nieto, 1996). In particular, it affirms its responsibility to prepare educators in order that they may assist all children, adolescents, and adults to understand the significance of cultural heritage in their personal development and participation in democracy. It assumes that (a) ethnic heritage is part of each person's endowment, (b) language exerts a powerful effect on development of attitudes and skills, and (c) culture influences identity and learning.

In addition, multicultural education is a democratic collaborative process that is both affectively and cognitively developed. To enhance democratic values through teacher education programs, the mere incorporation of content is not sufficient in and of itself; through the understanding and true empathy of what cultural pluralism and democracy are, we can accomplish the goals of multicultural education. As far as schools are concerned, these goals are set for students while others are set for educators. They are also inherent in the multicultural framework for schooling in democratic institutions.

Goals of Multicultural Education

The goals of multicultural education are as comprehensive as its premises. Suffice to mention the set of goals pertaining to students and teachers. The understanding of these goals is necessary for implementation, because we cannot afford more lip service in the educational arena; what is needed is an educational reform that is carried out by committed

education leaders who understand the needs of their students on the one hand, and their role as educators in meeting these needs, on the other.

Goals for Students

For the most part, students of color have been victimized as scapegoats in the public schools (Banks, 1995). This entails blaming their diversity (e.g. ethnicity, language . . .etc.) as the main reason for their failure (Deyhle, 1992); this ranges from segregating and tracking them to having lower expectations of them in achievement and success (Nieto, 1996). In an attempt to empower all students, multicultural education challenges us to revisit the conditions inherent in the culture of schools that explain the failure of students. In other words, it maintains that the educational system has not succeeded in reaching out to the students by adapting to their needs. Accordingly, multicultural educational solutions, based on the rich diversity, provide all students with ample opportunity to:

(1) develop positive attitudes towards their fellow diverse individuals;

(2) acquire knowledge and skills in order to appreciate diversity;

(3) eradicate negative stereotypical images fostered by ethnocentrism;

(4) bridge the gap of differences through understanding and empathy;

(5) develop historical understanding of their multiethnic society;

(6) develop democratic skills and pluralistic civic values;

(7) appreciate the dynamic societal changes in the democracy;

(8) develop awareness of the world of reality around them;

(9) explore realistic demographic and cultural variables that affect all society.

Goals for Educators

Like students, teachers have been blamed for their failure to meet the challenge of diversity in the classroom. While teachers' attitudes, idiosyncrasies, biases, prejudices, and perceptions do influence the success of their students (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Bennett, 1995; Nieto, 1996), it is unwise to use them as scapegoats in an attempt to explain school

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failure. Generally, teachers tend to be the product of the teacher-preparation programs they were in. If these programs lack adequate ingredients for preparing prospective teachers, then these teachers will reflect the inadequacy of the preparation process. Multicultural education is also a source empowerment for teachers. To do so, multicultural programs have a set of goals for teachers that are equally important. Accordingly, educators must:

(1) know, understand and appreciate different experiences and contributions of minorities and other ethnic groups in American society;

(2) show a thorough understanding of the nature of the pluralistic society and the conflict in American society and the basic causes of institutional racism, sexism, and social in equality;

(3) develop a sound rationale of multicultural education through philosophical base that incorporates pedagogical principles that can be transferred to curricular areas;

(4) enhance the optimality of academic and social development of their students through the knowledge and process having sociocultural factors that influence the learning process.

(5) understand students' attitudes, values, and other motivational forces that affect the performance of students.

(6) acquire knowledge in multicultural pedagogy and instruction to augment the spirit of democracy in classrooms so professional learning can occur both ways- teacher and student;

(7) learn effective classroom management and mediation that concern students of diverse sociocultural backgrounds;

(8) utilize multicultural materials that are sensitive and relevant to students' sociocultural backgrounds to maximize their academic achievement.

These goals form the blueprint that shape the process of preparing teachers for today's classrooms. Also, they provide an outline for implementing the key elements that

may achieve congruence between teaching an learning. Most importantly, these goals can only be achieved through a collaborative approach without which teacher educational programs are doomed to fail.

Unless we assess the socio-historical aspects of teacher education, schools will continue to suffer. We should account for these issues in terms of these goals as we attempt to understand where we have been, where we are, and where we are going. In fact, the American public educational system has come a long way due to the multicultural movement without which we will continue to manufacture a crisis in education in particular, and society in general.

Implications for Teacher Educators

To integrate various multicultural aspects in teacher education programs within the above conceptual framework, a number of guidelines that facilitate the fulfillment of the objectives of the democratic educational programs in diverse settings should be considered. Banks (1994) conceptualizes that multicultural education is multidimensional in nature; it consists of five interconnected dimensions: "(a) content integration, (b) the knowledge construction process, (c) prejudice reduction, (d) an equity pedagogy, and (e) an empowering school culture and social structure" (Banks, 1995, p. 4). One of the most fundamental dimensions of multicultural education is the knowledge construction process, because it relates to "the extent to which teachers help students to understand, investigate and determine how the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of references, perspective, and biases within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed within it" (Banks, 1994, p. 5).

These dimensions have important implications for teacher educators. It should be pointed out that a dynamic balance between these dimensions is necessary to empower all students and teachers in diverse settings. Furthermore, understanding students' and teachers' characteristics, feelings, attitudes, and experiences can help the programs in

attaining the desired educational goals (Nieto, 1996; Gay, 1995; Garcia, 1988; Garcia, 1991). Most importantly, teachers and educators will be to develop more democratic values and attitudes in themselves and their students so that they become more active participants in the pluralistic society.

Based on this approach, teacher education programs should take into consideration the following guidelines:

1. Prospective teachers should be prepared to confront their prejudices and biases. Teachers should maintain a positive attitude toward all students and must believe that all students are wanting to learn and succeed (Nieto, 1996; Grant & Gomez, 1996). They should not view their students from their own cultural filters that might result in excluding a large portion of their students in the classroom (Suleiman, 1995). They should be prepared to have high expectations of all students. Most importantly, to assume their responsibility to be empathetic, prospective teachers in diverse settings must decenter themselves through an increased ethnic consciousness among people and members of different groups that exist interdependently, and thus, help depolarize interethnic hostility and conflict in the classroom.

Garza & Barnes (1989) suggest that teacher education programs should provide prospective teachers "with opportunities to validate and accept their own cultures as a basis for the acceptance of other cultures" (p. 7). Thus student teachers must be trained to value diversity represented in their unique interactional patterns. They should promote a profound understanding of the self through the understanding of others and vice versa. In fact, each individual is unique and is a composition of a set of subcultures. This allows individuals to see others as others would like to see themselves.

2. Prospective teachers should study the history of the American educational system from a multicultural pluralistic perspective. Historical issues have valid implications for understanding conditions of inequity and social injustice. It must be borne in mind that history ought to be studied in an informative way. For

example, blame cannot be placed on whites as the main cause of injustice against people of color; rather, students should seriously engage in reflecting upon past events as they relate to the present and future of the society. In addition, they should deal with the social and historical realities of the American society to help students gain a better understanding of the causes of oppression and inequality and ways in which these social problems might be eliminated (Bennett, 1995; Banks, 1994). Students should see themselves in the curriculum as valued members of the multicultural society; textbooks, literature, and materials must be free from any misinformation and bias, nor should they perpetuate prejudicial and negative stereotypical images about the groups they represent. Also, the effective implementation of multicultural teaching must be approached as a long-term process that will not produce dramatic, overnight changes in the academic institutions. Finally, providing the best education for all requires us to utilize multicultural resources in the local community and increase the involvement of concerned participants in the education of all students (Bennett, 1995; Cortés, 1990).

3. Teachers should be prepared to become multicultural brokers in the pluralistic classroom. Gay (1995) maintains that a cultural broker "is one who thoroughly understands the different cultural systems, is able to interpret cultural symbols from one frame of reference to another, can mediate cultural incompatibilities, and knows how to build bridges or establish linkages across cultures that facilitate the instructional process" (p. 37). To do so, many skills and objectives "should form the substantive core of all teachers of teacher preparation programs" (Gay, 1995, p. 37) . Thus, programs need to help prospective teachers construct the adequate knowledge first; then impart the change process through action and mediation; and incorporate equitable pedagogical practices (Banks, 1995; Gay, 1995; King, 995; Nieto, 1996; Grant & Gomez, 1996).

In addition, prospective teachers should be an integral part of a community network; they should be trained how to work collaboratively with clinicians, nurses, parents, administrators, community leaders and all participants in the social and educational

institutions. Since continuity among these institutions should be maintained to best meet the social and educational needs of all students, prospective teachers should be afforded the opportunity to play their role in various social networks.

4. Prospective teachers should be trained to be flexible in teaching. This allows prospective teachers to provide compatible teaching methods that are bound by the unique sociocultural aspects that affect learning in diverse classrooms. A sound multicultural pedagogy should be based on "culturally correct" teaching methods and curricula that account for such conditions as sensitivity, empathy, relevance and effectiveness. Indeed, through the use of culturally sensitive materials and techniques students' academic achievement in all areas will increase. Once teachers effectively demonstrate a careful understanding of the learning situation, their students' motivation will be increased. Most importantly, culturally relevant curriculum and instructional techniques should relate personally and experientially to the cognitive, academic, social, and linguistic abilities of their students. Since these vary from one student to another, teachers should be encouraged to diversify the teaching methods and use of teaching aids to address different avenues of learning; sameness in teaching for all will guarantee educational inequity for many (Cortés, 1990).

Finally, unless prospective teachers attain a meaningful level of multiculturalism, they may not be able to work effectively in diverse settings. Gay (1995) argues that "no one should be allowed to graduate from a teacher certification program or be licensed to teach without being well grounded in how the dynamic of cultural conditioning operates in the teaching and learning" (p. 37). A curriculum and teacher education model based on multicultural democratic principles can guide and empower prospective teachers as they select the subject matter content relevant to their students, and identity. Also, this model allows participants to set pertinent educational goals and objectives conducive to students' attitudes and motivation. In addition, it helps them acquire and transmit skills and knowledge needed for individual's civic responsibilities. Providing a rationale for global

multicultural education also gives teachers the support they need in facing pressures and questions from colleagues, community, and students.

Once these programs train teachers how to give credence to all students' cultures and their contributions to humanity through multicultural curricular activities and instructional strategies, desired promising educational outcomes will follow. These are: enhancing students' self concept, augmenting their motivation, affirming our society's democratic pluralism, and appreciating cultural diversity.

Conclusion

The growing diversity of the society is largely reflected in the U.S. public schools and inevitably affect the educational treatments. Undoubtedly, educational reform efforts embodied in preparing teachers for the 21st. century require a drastic step in pluralizing teacher education so that prospective teachers keep up with the evolving educational demands in today's technological society. Unless we immerse student teachers in the realm of multiculturalism and its pedagogical practices that are conducive to the needs of diverse populations, we will continue to alienate language minority children and deprive mainstream students of benefiting from multiple learning opportunities. Since the diverse classrooms pose a challenge for prospective teachers, teacher preparation programs should infuse multiculturalism in all avenues of learning/teaching situations. This includes preparing all student teachers to become more competent in the ever-changing diverse global society. Thus, student teachers should be provided with the opportunity to utilize multicultural curricular and teaching practices, incorporate relevant experiential activities that nourish enriching scientific knowledge, and harness the merits of diversity in today's increasingly multicultural classrooms.

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